Tanong ng Bayan / A20
One-woman policy: Uubra ba sa machong Pinoy!

News / A7
Controversial general promoted after Iraq stint

Across / A18
Kalinga RTC judge handling heinous crimes shot dead in Tabuk

News / A2
Ermita, Tiglao to take turns as executive secretary, say Palace sources

Business / B1
World oil prices hit new record: $44.99 a barrel





US tag of CPP as terrorist group bad for peace talks

Dream come true: Cuddling Carl, Clarence 'one by one'

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, August 11, 2004 • 32 pages / vol. 19 / no. 244
website: www.inq7.net

JdV: No text message tax

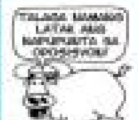
Franchise tax on telecoms considered



A COOL MILLION

'Survival,' says Palace; it's 'suicide' for Joker

Foreign investment shrinking 34% each year



Majority blinks, will take 'crumbs'

US Embassy: No cut in assistance to RP for now

So, what else is new?

PDI, employees union sign 3-year, ₱74.6-million CBA package



TOGETHER.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Half of Cabinet may have to go

AT LEAST half of the Cabinet may be replaced as President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has promised to announce all Cabinet changes next week, completes the reorganization of her official family.

Given a choice

Mercado considered

5 sub-sector heads



SIMPLY PUT

NUJP: Only 2, not 14, cases of journalist killings solved

Woman solon takes on Pope over 'anti-feminist' letter



Converting nuclear plant makes more sense–solon

IT WOULD make more economic sense to convert and utilize the idled Bataan Nuclear Power Plant than continue paying billions of pesos for its debt and maintenance, administration Rep. Joey Salceda said yesterday.

The Albay congressman, who chairs the House committee on economic affairs, believes the government should pursue "in earnest" its proposal to transform the BNPP into an "an earning energy asset without resurrecting the nuclear issue."

Salceda said the country would suffer more opportunity losses if nothing was done about the plant which he described as "already a sunk cost."

He noted that between now and 2007, the country would need to shell out P7.4 billion in debt payments for the mothballed facility, on top of the P67 billion it has paid in the past 18 years.

'What a pity'

From 2003 to 2007, the government will also have to spend a total of P284.6 million to preserve the BNPP assets lying idle in Morong, Bataan, he said in a statement.

"Whew, what a waster. What a country. What a pity," Salceda said.

Faced with the threat of a possible energy crisis in four years, President Macapagal-Arroyo revived an earlier proposal to convert the BNPP into a gas-fired power plant that could generate 600 megawatts of electricity.

The proposal was immediately shot down by legislators, activists and even scientists on the ground that, among other things, it would be more expensive to revive it than to build an entirely new natural gas power plant in Batangas.

Malacañang retreated and said the fate of the BNPP would now depend on the outcome of a technical feasibility study being conducted by the energy department.

Burden since 1984

Built in 1984 by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos under a deal with the US-based Westinghouse Corp., the BNPP has been a financial burden on the country that continues to pay $155,000 a day to service debts incurred by the plant. The entire project, which the post-Marcos-Aquino government declared fraudulent and refused to operate, is estimated to have cost $2 billion.

Salceda recalled that the BNPP cost was transferred to the national government on June 30, 1986 at a cost of P42.3 billion when it was mothballed by the Aquino administration.

"If the same money had been invested from 1986 to 2004, the P42.3 billion ... would have compounded to P258 billion at 10 percent to P510 billion at 14 percent," he said.

Party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales said the government should assemble a group of engineers and planners to start a comprehensive study on the viability of refitting the BNPP if it was serious in its proposal to convert it to a natural gas plant.

Rosales said the study should determine the technical and financial viability and the safety considerations of such a conversion. *Carlito Pablo, with a report from Cynthia Balana*

JdV: No text message tax for 28-M subscribers

Can't be reached

Withdrawn

Another tax

Considerable balance

No taxes priority

To burden telecoms

'Survival,' says Palace; it's 'suicide' for Joker

Growing resistance

More borrowings

Oil tax priority

Listen to all sectors

Exceeds deficit target

Alternatives

US Embassy: No cut in assistance to RP for now

Not under review

Patching things up

Back to Iraq

Military forces

So, what else is new?

2 other programs

No change in policy

Tough graft-buster named postmaster

By Armand N. Nocum

PRESIDENTIAL Anti-Graft Commission Chair Dario C. Rama, who steered the office through its most fruitful years, yesterday took his oath as the new postmaster general.

No replacement has been named, but Palace sources said Defense Undersecretary Connie de Guzman, President Macapagal-Arroyo's former appointments secretary, is one of those being eyed to take over from Rama.

Rama was silent on the matter, but PAGC Commissioner Teresita Baltazar confirmed his scheduled oath-taking in Malacañang at 3:30 p.m. yesterday, an event supposedly purposely kept from the media.

After his graft-busting stint at the PAGC, President Arroyo reportedly now wants Rama to clean up the corruption-ridden post office.

"The pearl of great price of the Macapagal administration is leaving us," said Baltazar.

Under Rama's two-year-and-five-month stint at the PAGC, scores of ranking government officials, including former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza, came under his scrutiny and were recommended for either dismissal or suspension from the government service.

In the case of the two officials, however, Malacañang's Committee of Peers reversed the PAGC's ruling.

Baltazar cited Rama not only for standing up to political pressure but also for sticking to the PAGC mandate to resolve administrative cases involving members of the Cabinet in 60 days.

"He is an inspiration to us all," said Baltazar.

Rama, a native of Davao City, earned the respect of his peers and subordinates for his modest and frugal lifestyle. He was the only member of the Cabinet who took a jeepney to work from his rented room on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City.

Early in his term, Malacañang offered Rama a car and a cellular phone, but he refused them. He also insisted on paying for every piece of paper he and the media used in his office. He was also known to return gifts brought to his office.

Rama was appointed a commissioner of the Commission on Elections in 1986 and of the then Presidential Commission Against Graft and Corruption in 1994. He became chair of the PAGC on Feb. 15, 2002.

Officials mum on Chinoys' abduction

By Nelson F. Flores

INTERIOR Secretary Angelo Reyes has refused to comment on the reported abduction of three Chinese-Filipino brothers in Cavite over the weekend.

The INQUIRER repeatedly tried to contact Reyes, who used to head the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force, to no avail.

Interior Undersecretary for Administration Melchor Rosales in an interview said no statement would be forthcoming for the moment to ensure the safety of the persons involved. He added, however, that the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team was on top of the situation.

"We are doing everything to see to it that the abduction victims would be fine," Rosales said.

Police investigation showed that unidentified gunmen abducted the brothers—Patterson, Richard and Jose Ngo—who operate a business at the industrial park in Rosario last Saturday.

The brothers were on their way to Tanza when the gunmen in a sedan blocked their sport utility vehicle. One of the gunmen took over the wheel of the victims' vehicle, but Patterson was able to jump out and escape.

"At the moment, we can't give out any information about the case," said an official of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force. "Our paramount concern is the safety of the victims."

"We are not aware of any ransom demand, and we are not at liberty to release information until after the victims are freed," a police investigator, who asked not to be named, said.

Police later recovered the victims' abandoned Mitsubishi Pajero at the University Hills Subdivision in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

Press takes up runaway growth

REPRESENTATIVES of the press and experts on population and development will get together next week to take a hard look at problems arising from uncontrolled population growth.

The forum will be a series of seminar-workshops that the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), the national association of Philippine newspapers, is organizing for its members.

The forum is supported by the Philippine Center for Population and Development (PCPD).

The seminar-workshops will be held at the following places and dates: in Subic for PPI members from Luzon, Aug. 15-18; Cebu City for members from the Visayas, Sept. 12-15, and Davao City for Mindanao members, Oct. 17-20.

The experts who will address the seminars are former Health Undersecretary Mario Taguiwalo and demographers Dr. Mercedes B. Concepcion and Dr. Aurora Perez. Serving as journalist-resource persons will be Vergel O. Santos, media critic and editorial consultant of BusinessWorld; Juan L. Mercado, director of the Press Foundation of Asia, and Vicente G. Tirol, publisher of the defunct Pinoy Times and lecturer at Ateneo de Manila University's Department of Communication.

Ma. Socorro Camacho-Reyes, president of PCPD, and Milagros G. Corpus, PCPD grants officer, will also be on hand.

Long wait for SC decision for Abadilla 5

THE DAILY GOSPEL

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

Controversial general promoted after stint in Iraq

Foreign investment shrinking 34% each year

One-time, big ticket project

Death of mining

Cuddling Carl and Clarence 'one by one' dream come true for Silay City mom

Face-to-face soon





No major problems

Another year

PDI, employees union sign 3-year, P74.6-million CBA package

Highlights

Benefits on top of bonuses



Lifestyle check flunker turned in by own relatives

By Armand N. Nocum

IT WOULD make for an excellent episode in a legal drama series.

Two brothers have succeeded in having their stepmother, a government lawyer, fired from her job after they informed the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission about her undeclared and undervalued assets worth almost P20 million.

Ordered dismissed from the service by President Macapagal-Arroyo was incoming Assistant City Prosecutor Evelyn Bruil-Cruz of Manila. She was the latest official to fail the government's lifestyle check.

Malacañang announced on Friday that it was upholding the PAGC decision declaring Cruz liable for violation of the anti-graft law. The commission had acted on a "verified complaint" filed by the stepsons of the official, Emiliani Wilfredo Cruz and Carlos Cruz Jr.

Hailing Malacañang's move, the PAGC noted that it was the first time a public official had been turned in by her own relatives. Lawyer Ramon Elmer Gatchalian, PAGC director for legal and research, put it a little more professionally: "We have broken the taboo on graft as a well-kept family secret."

In a complaint filed on Dec. 1, 2003, the Cruz brothers noted that their stepmother had "left out" many properties when she submitted her Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) for 1999-2000. Evelyn had declared ownership of four houses and lots in Quezon City, Baguio and Laguna; a condominium and building in Manila, and cars and pieces of jewelry worth P2 million.

The brothers said she did not declare three properties in Quezon City—a P4,394,000 lot in Cubao, a lot and building worth close to P4 million on Balete Drive and another lot and building worth more than P2 million. Also, she allegedly omitted a condominium unit and club shares at the "posh" Tagaytay Highlands Country Club, and a restaurant, computer shop and billiard hall in Bulacan.

"Under-declared," the complainants said, were the P1.7-million building on Yale Street, Cubao; the close to P6-million building and lot on 8th Avenue, Cubao; the P376,390 property in Green Valley Country Club, Baguio City, and a P1.5 million property in Quiapo.

On top of these, Emiliani and Carlos claimed that their stepmother's cars cost around a million each.

Cruz denied the allegations, saying her stepchildren knew only too well that her source of income was legitimate—a trucking business left behind by her deceased husband Carlos Galman Cruz, the father of the boys. By successfully managing the business, she said, she was able to acquire the properties that she had declared.

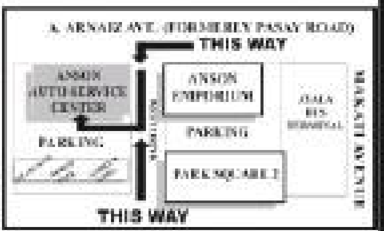
She deliberately excluded the other properties from her SALN, she said, because it was her husband who had purchased these, and their ownership was shared by other people.

Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Waldo Q. Flores, who issued the Malacañang order on May 26, shot down her defense. He said Republic Act No. 6713, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, was clear on the need for officials to declare the assets and business interests of their spouses as well.

"The fact that the respondent's spouse is decreased is of no moment," the Palace said.





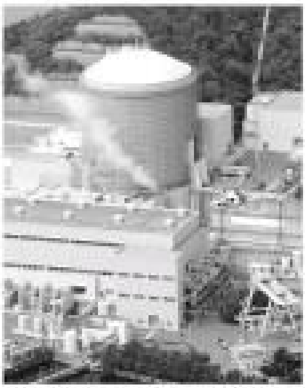




The WORLD

Plot to attack US before polls bared

ISLAMABAD—Al-Qaida operatives captured in Pakistan were plotting terrorist attacks aimed at influencing the US presidential elections in November, a senior Pakistani intelligence official said Tuesday.



A HELICOPTER hovers over the No. 3 reactor of the Mihama Nuclear Power Plant in Mihama, Japan, Tuesday one day after a steam leak from a cooling pipe killed four people and injured seven others in the nation's worst nuclear plant accident.

Newer leaders may be filling higher positions in al-Qaida

Blasts rock Istanbul; two killed

Nuke accident in Japan blamed on faulty pipe



TURKISH officials search for evidence after a bomb attack in Sultanahmet, Istanbul.

Radical cleric vows to press fight vs US troops

Cuba's Castro turns 78

Time reporter ordered jailed for CIA leak

A FEDERAL judge in Washington held a reporter for Time magazine in contempt of court on Monday and ordered him jailed for refusing to name the government officials who disclosed the identity of a CIA officer to him.

The magazine was also held in contempt and ordered to pay a fine of $1,000 a day.

The judge, Thomas F. Hogan of US District Court, suspended both sanctions while Time and its reporter, Matthew Cooper, pursued an appeal, but the judge firmly rejected their contention that the First Amendment entitled journalists to refuse to answer a grand jury's questions about confidential sources.

"The information requested," Hogan wrote, "is very limited, all available means of obtaining the information have been exhausted, the testimony sought is necessary for completion of the investigation, and the testimony sought is expected to constitute direct evidence of innocence or guilt."

The ruling came in a politically charged investigation into whether members of the Bush administration illegally disclosed the identity of an officer for the CIA.

The subpoenas for Cooper and other journalists were issued by a special counsel, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, who was trying to learn who told Robert D. Novak, the syndicated columnist, the identity of an undercover CIA officer, Valerie Plame. Plame is married to Joseph C. Wilson IV, a former diplomat who asserted in a July 6, 2003, Op-Ed article in The New York Times that President Bush had relied on distorted intelligence when he said, in his 2003 State of the Union Address, that Iraq had sought to acquire uranium from Africa.

New York Times

US solon wants media leak probed

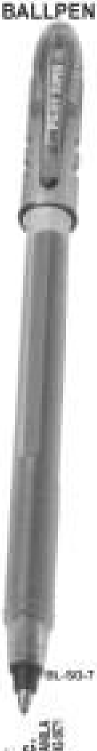
WASHINGTON — A US senator asked the White House to explain how and why the name of an al-Qaida informant was leaked to the press, amid concern it had hurt the war on terror, a letter from the lawmaker showed on Monday.

A Pakistani intelligence source said on Friday that US officials confirmed the name of captured al-Qaida suspect Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan while he was still cooperating with Pakistani authorities as part of a sting operation against Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, thereby compromising his cover.

"I respectfully request an explanation to me and any other member of Congress who might wish one of who leaked this Mr. Khan's name, for what reason it was leaked, and whether ... reports that this leak compromised future intelligence activity are accurate," Sen. Charles Schumer, a Democrat from New York, wrote in a letter to White House domestic security adviser Frances Townsend on Aug. 6.

A copy of the letter was obtained by Reuters on Monday.

Reuters



US federal agents to check all passengers on helicopter tours

NEW YORK—Federal security officers will take over the screening of all passengers on helicopter tours in New York City after learning that suspected al-Qaida operatives in Pakistan had photographs, a brochure and other information about the tours.

A security directive issued by the Transportation Security Administration orders federal screeners to begin doing passenger inspections at the city's three heliports, a job now done by private security contractors, Mark Hatfield, a spokesperson for the TSA, said Monday. Passengers will be subject to the same types of searches for weapons, explosives and suspicious items as are now in place at airports.

The helicopter tour operators will also be required to provide the names of passengers to the federal government to run against federal "no-fly" lists of terrorist suspects and to provide names and data on their own employees for federal background checks. The operators will also have to name a security coordinator who would be available 24 hours a day to respond to federal inquiries.

While federal officials have imposed broad safety measures at the aviation and rail industries since the Sept. 11 attacks, the move to tighten security at New York's heliports marks the first time that they have imposed these types of stepped-up measures at specific sites because of a perceived threat. Officials said they plan to redeploy federal screeners from other cities to the New York heliports by the end of the week.

As it stands right now, almost no regulations regarding security procedures exist for the operators of tourist and charter helicopters in New York City, several industry officials said Monday.

"It's basically kind of voluntary right now," said Michael Rose, the owner and chief executive officer of Anadite Corp., a corporate charter company in Princeton, N.J. "There's no guidelines for us at the moment."

Many helicopter companies adopted stricter measures on their own after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Rose said. Although his company does not make passengers go through a metal detector, employees now check passengers' luggage before they board and will sometimes call up a special hotline linked with the Newark, N.J., office of the FBI to check passengers' names against terror watch lists, he said.

"If someone's calling us out of the blue, and they want to see Manhattan, and they have some funny-looking name, we check it out," he said. New York Times News Service

E-mail at: sports@inquirer.com.ph

2 DAYS TO ATHENS

Tightest security ever for Games

ATHENS—Greece and the International Olympic Committee said on Monday they were confident everything had been done to ensure the Athens Games are safe from a terrorist attack.

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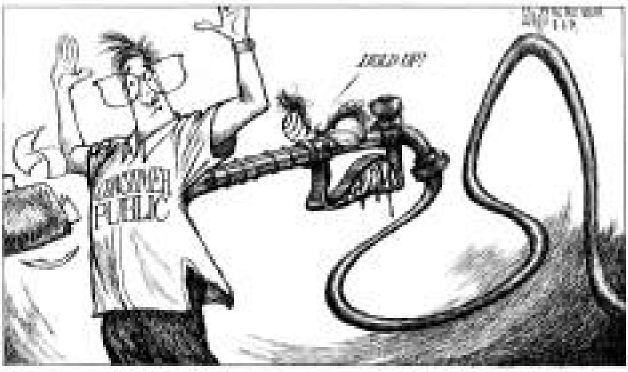
Reuters

First Olympic gold now worth ₱8M

[illegible]

Marc Anthony Reyes

OPINION



Olympians

EDITORIAL

[illegible]

Higher fuel tax will affect prices of everything

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

[illegible]

Friendships

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

[illegible]

Assassin's line of fire

ANALYSIS



Amando Doronila

'Machos' of Pasong Tirad

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

Linggo ng Wika and Filipino-English

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

Just kids

PINOY KASI



Michael L. Tan

Inutile law and law enforcers

LETTERS

Population: women's rights issue



Family planning improves life

Lessons from Conrad

Make the children read

Pork barrel and IRA expenditures should be made more transparent

Wrong way of protecting prison inmates' children

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

No takers for Bataan 'nuke folly'



FILE photo of the Bataan nuclear power plant.



ENGINEER Bacani, the first and last to work on the BNPP

Across the NATION

Judge in Kalinga shot dead in Tabuk

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A regional trial court judge in Kalinga was gunned down as he and his wife stopped to buy bread in a bakery in Tabuk town on Monday night.

[illegible]



TRADING POST

Lack of storage facilities makes farmers' lives more difficult in La Trinidad, Benguet. This farmer is forced to pack his potato harvest manually and quickly for lack of storage.

Sulu political leaders start bid to end feuds

[illegible]

787 dengue cases in Calabarzon

[illegible]

Int'l journalists' group slams proposal to arm media men

[illegible]

More violence

[illegible]

Knee-jerk reaction

[illegible]

College student loses job for joining rally



723,700 ha of public land lying idle, says real estate expert

ROUNDUP

Inmate found dead

14 held for drugs

Oratorical tilt on 29th yr

Majority blinks, will take 'crumbs'

Leftovers

No takers

Try basketball

Ticking bomb

Enrile's credentials

US tag of CPP as terror . . .

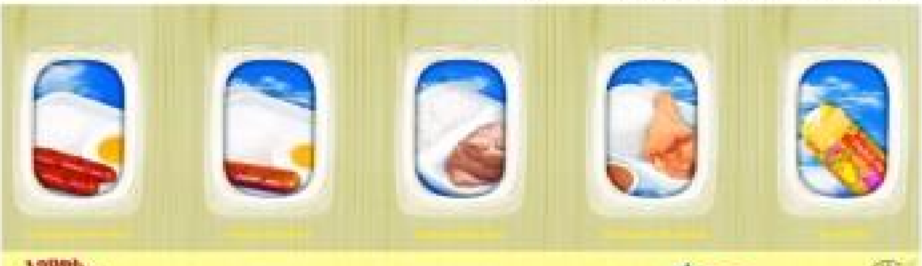
Provisions

Very serious problems

No sufficient progress

No. 1 terrorist

Reflection of public sentiment



METRO

Marcelo plea: Not guilty

Routine check leads to 2-hour gun battle; 3 killed

2 inmates die in Cainta prison



GETTING CREATIVE

Mother decries police watch on son

METROBRIEFS

Summarily executed in QC

Lacson case vs Tulfo junked

Four cities unite to tax MRT



BUSINESS



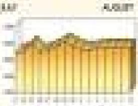
World oil prices touch new record

CURRENCIES

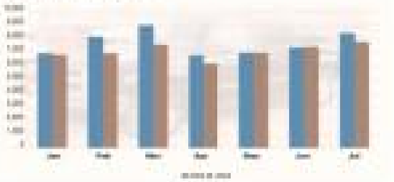


STOCK MARKET

Shares end higher



BSP vows to keep key rates steady



JANUARY-JULY

Vehicle sales down 7.4%



How a robbery opened doors to retail success





Crossroads

Brand is the price

"Naughty"

Exhilarating ride

SUCCESS STORY



Competitive spirits

COCKTAILS

Victor C. Agustin

BPI revives interest in Indon bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

ELECTION SPENDING

ABS-CBN profit up 10% to P560M

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SEC tightens audit rules

Retail confab set

Disclosures

Vehicle sales down . . .

5-yr T-bill rate dips to 11.8%

By Michelle V. Remo

A LACKLUSTER US economy drove down the rate of five-year Philippine debt papers to 11.875 percent yesterday, as banks showed strong appetite for local long-term government securities.

"Momentum of a possible increase in (United States) interest rates is not as fast as initially perceived, and data coming out do not show a strong US economy," said National Treasurer Mina Figueroa, explaining the decline in the rate of the five-year treasury bonds.

The 11.875-percent rate for the five-year debt paper was 12.5 basis points lower than the 12 percent recorded during its previous auction on June 15.

Figueroa, who heads the Treasury's auction committee, said the improved rate showed market preference for local government securities and enough liquidity among banks.

Last Friday, the United States Labor Department announced a much lower-than-expected number of job creation in July, sending jitters to its financial and stock markets. The department said new jobs created in the United States in July stood at 32,000, or only about one-seventh of the expected 228,000.

Awash with cash and gaining more confidence on the local investment environment, banks scrambled for the five-year T-bond. Tenders for the long-term government security reached P9.359 billion, or more than double the government's offering of only P4.5 billion.

The auction committee accepted P4.5 billion worth of bids, raising the entire amount of its scheduled borrowing.

Meanwhile, Figueroa said the national government might again tap the international market for a bond offering to complete the financing requirement of state-owned National Power Corp. An international bond issue is also being considered to prefund the government's budget requirements for next year, she said.

PUV group, oil firm to put up 200 stations

By Clarissa S. Batino

A MAJOR transport group has tied up with small player Fil Oil controlled by the Villavicencio family to initially put up more than 200 small fuel stations in the outskirts of Metro Manila and nearby provinces starting this year.

The Philippine Confederation of Drivers Organizations-Alliance of Concerned Transport Operators said it would open four stations within the month. The Villavicencio family also owns the Flying V gasoline stations.

The tie-up with Fil Oil, said PCDO-Acto, would allow transport groups to cope with the spiraling cost of fuel.

All stations to be jointly operated by PCDO-Acto and Fil Oil would provide a 60-centavo per liter discount on gasoline and diesel to all public utility vehicles, according to PCDO-Acto president Efren de Luna.

"If we put up stations and initiate livelihood projects, then we could prevent transport groups from going on strike and asking for a fare hike despite the continued increase in fuel prices," said De Luna.

Pump prices are likely to go up by another P2 per liter from September to December, according to the Consumer Price Watch.

Other transport groups complained that diesel prices had gone up by P2 a liter since June when the government allowed jeeps and buses to increase minimum fare by P1.50 and P2.

One transport group, Fejodap, is urging the big oil players to revive the P1 per liter discount to PUVs, while another group, Piston, is lobbying to scrap the deregulation law and to bring back control of Petron Corp. to the government.

"The 60-centavo per liter discount would be available to all PUVs and not limited to our members," said De Luna.

According to the agreement, Fil Oil would provide the "portable gas stations" and the transport group would take care of the location, De Luna said. PCDO-Acto has terminals all over the country that could house a small station with two hoses, one for gasoline and one for diesel. Fil Oil, De Luna added, was prepared to spend about P1.5 million to put up the stations.

BPI revives interest in Indon bank

From page B3

percent stake in PT Bank Permata for at least 1.8 times the book value last year or about $174 million.

PT Bank Permata, formerly known as PT Bank Bali Terbuka, operates a network of 243 domestic branches and at least two overseas branches located in the United States and Cayman Island.

Banking sources said BPI did not want to be left out in the potential wave of mergers and acquisitions in the local banking system. One banking source said BPI would not wait until it had been dislodged from its ranking by another bank like Henry Sy's Banco de Oro Universal Bank before taking steps to grow further.

Cocktales

From page B3

buzz. In other words, just like Tatler.

But Benpres Publications general manager Thelma Sioson-San Juan was emphatic in clarifying that their new baby, also a monthly, is not designed to compete with Tatler since Metro Society would aim for the "young socialite set" and would concentrate on fashion and style.

"It is no Tatler at all," said San Juan, trying to be even-handed in tone and in choice of words. "It (Metro Society) fills the market need for substantive content that tells you the young socialites' generation that has taken over or is taking over" from the high-society beacons as Imelda Cojuangco and Chito Madrigal-Collantes.

"Emphasize substantive content, please," San Juan added.

Society will have Inquirer etiquette columnist Lia Bernardo as chief editor, as well as Mia Borromeo (entertainment editor), Raul Manzano (society editor), Bea Zobel Jr. (culture editor), and Philip Cu-Unjieng (editor-at-large).

Tatler, in the meantime, is launching in January another glossy called "Society." Not to be confused with Metro Society, Society is an annual publication and a regional magazine, which means it would also contain articles about famous foreign faces and names just like Tatler.

In a Melo tone

MELO'S proprietor Carmelo Santiago wrote to say that "I, too, am a victim" in the unfortunate P4-million estafa case now hounding his son-in-law, FPJ campaigner Richard Rivera.

The steakhouse owner said the bad check that his son-in-law had allegedly given as payment to a money changer had been "stolen from me," along with three other blank checks from Santiago's check book.

Santiago said he immediately reported the loss to Security Bank, enclosing a certification from the bank's Paseo de Roxas branch.

"I would like to categorically state that the transactions entered into by Richard (Rivera) were all done without my knowledge, advice and consent," he said.

Meanwhile, ex-RPN 9 reporter Richard Elmer Rivera, who is now into public relations, wants to clarify that he is not the same or even related to Santiago's son-in-law.

Richard Elmer was somehow confused with the other Rivera since the former had also been involved in the last campaign, helping FPJ senatorial candidate Amina Rasul.

Heard through the grapevine

HOORAY for the Belmontes and fairness.

The newspaper owners have succeeded in convincing their publisher-columnist Maximo "Max" V. Soliven, clipping his hold on the Opinion section and surrogate columns with the publication, almost word for word, of a rebuttal letter from former Finance Secretary Ramon del Rosario Jr.

In the past, letters to the editor critical of Soliven had always ended up in the wastebasket.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

LIFESTYLE

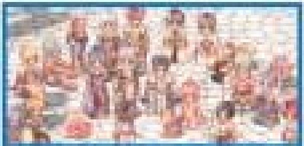
Editor Chito Bataf-Fontanar
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor



Pinoy diehards get Ragnarok-crazy in the land of the morning calm



SUPER troopers, aka the cheerleading squad: Level Up!'s Mark Reyes, Rebirth's Chanan, Level Up!'s Joel Borja and Paul and Rebirth's Carlo



ONE of those costume contestants in Philippine Ragnarok Online



RAGNAROK creator Myung Jin Lee, whom reporter Miel Reyes interviewed

'RoKing' in Korea

Text and photos by Miel V. Reyes
2bU Correspondent

MANY people deem Ragnarok Online as nothing but a waste of precious time and money. But when there's 100 million Korean won (that's $85,000 to you, thank you very much) at stake at the first Ragnarok World Championship (RWC), it's the nerds that get the last laugh.

[illegible]



REBIRTH'S Christopher Chanan revs up his character

[illegible]

We're not in Kansas anymore...

[illegible]

TURN TO C2







'RoKing' in Korea

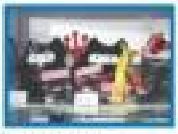






One down, another to go

Unholy battle



Meeting the magic makers

411 on Ragnarok

Rockin' accessories

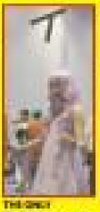
Win Ragnarok goodie bags!

So this is Cosplay!

Text and photos by Paul V. Reyes

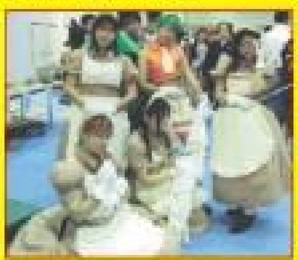
Meet the people you want to invite to your next costume party















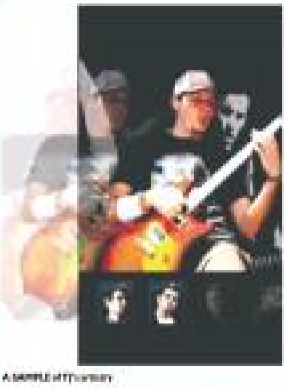


My top five beauty list



These products have been tried, tried again, and tested. You decide if they make your own list.

5 products that will keep your face healthy

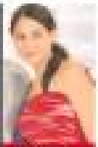


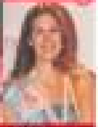
A SAMPLE of TJ's artistry

We have a winner!







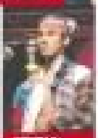


A city of queens

There are no princesses in Cebu, only queens. And like all queens, they can surely bust balls. Ouch!







New supahstar

Denim Ball dazzlers



2BU! LIFESTYLE



Home-schooled kid Christopher Paolini began writing 'Eragon,' the first tome in his magic-and-maces Inheritance trilogy, when he was 15

Young fantasy comes true

"Eragon: Inheritance Book One"
By Christopher Paolini
Alfred A. Knopf, New York
2003, 509 pp.

By Ruel S. De Vera

IT is the stuff of teen fantasy: Young man begins an extraordinary journey that helps him fulfill his immense promise and finds his destiny on an unimaginable scale. The amazing thing is that this is the premise both in and behind the book "Eragon."

Review

A lot has been written about "Eragon's" author prodigy—and it is a tale worth telling. Home-schooled small kid Christopher Paolini, weaned on science fiction and fantasy, conceives a sprawling fantasy epic full of dragons and wizards at 15.

He decides to actually begin writing the epic and, with the aid of friends and relatives, self-publishes "Eragon," the first book in what Paolini has ambitiously called the "Inheritance Trilogy." The big-time publishing firm Alfred A. Knopf takes a shine to the little book, acquires up the rights not only to "Eragon," but to the forthcoming sequels as well. Abrakadabra. Paolini is an international best-selling author at 19.

While it is notable that "Eragon" was written by someone so young and under such unique circumstances, it has to be said that the book itself is good but not necessarily great reading—though the parallels to Paolini's own story are fascinating.

Dark times have fallen on the Kingdom of Alagaësia. The dangerous King Galbatorix rules with a mighty and merciless hand. The poor peasant boy Eragon discovers a mysterious gem in the treacherous Spine mountains—and discovers it isn't a gem at all, but a dragon egg.

Eragon remembers tales of the heroic Dragon Riders who rode the winds over Alagaësia, before they were betrayed by Galbatorix.

Bonding with dragons

Once the dragon hatches, a bond is formed between the boy and the hatchling, which is soon named Saphira. But evil forces are on the move, destroying much of what the boy holds dear.

Fleeing the tiny village of Carvahall with Saphira and the enigmatic storyteller Brom, Eragon seeks revenge for the death of his uncle but finds more questions than answers.

As he makes his way across the Kingdom, Eragon encounters everything from a werecat to a fearsome Shade that is shadowing him. Along the way he discovers that he has been named after one of the greatest Dragon Riders ever—a stunning coincidence, considering he is now the newest Dragon Rider, and Galbatorix will stop at nothing to capture him and Saphira.

Hooking up with the stoic wanderer Murtagh, Eragon grows in power as Brom teaches him to unlock his magical gifts even as he is schooled in the art of war.

Several dreams of a beautiful elf leads him to rescue Arya from the clutches of the enemy and the companions make a brave dash for the Varden, the rebels who oppose the despotic Galbatorix.

Paolini's prose is a mixed blessing: its simplicity makes it very accessible even to the youngest readers, yet it is also often overly simplistic and lacking in detail or texture.

"Eragon's" plot (and most likely the plot of the Inheritance saga itself) is very derivative, with many different influences, but the most obvious ones are J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy (Shades, Urgals and Galbatorix, oh my) and Anne McCaffrey's "Pern" books.

Paolini clearly has a very ambitious plot in mind as his final gambit in "Eragon," the siege at Farthen Dûr, clearly displays.

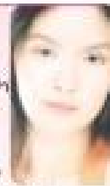
While the story itself isn't exactly groundbreaking, Paolini did what Tolkien did at the beginning. He has crafted an entire world, com-

YOUNG/C6



Avon's Teen Advisory Council is composed of vibrant young ladies who know who they are, what they want and how to get them

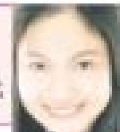
Power girls



Kaycee Abigail De Leon Adao



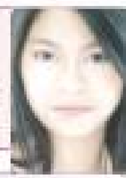
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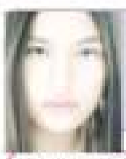
Carla Nicole Sia



Catherine Mirasol



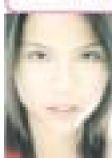
Justine Kayne Cordero



Angelica Bella B. Misa



Mary Anne P. Alabanza



Marianne Grace Zshomack Araneta

Young fantasy . . .

Amiable protagonist